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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1450
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3498
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2884
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000721

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ELECTION: PLAYING FIELD TILTS TOWARDS
BAKIYEV

REF: A. BISHKEK 682

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 663

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Classified By: CDA Lee Litzenberger, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: An alliance of election monitoring NGOs released an interim election report that documents a broad range of election code violations, particularly regarding the formation of district and precinct-level election commissions. An NGO report found that President Bakiyev receives over 90 percent of broadcast election coverage, and figures released by the Central Election Commission (CEC) show that Bakiyev has a compelling advantage in election funds. A militia colonel made a surprise appearance at an NGO roundtable, and after expounding on the militia's apolitical role, asked to hear complaints about the election and made more-or-less substantive responses. End summary.

NGO Report Details Election Code Violations

[1](#)2. (SBU) The NGO alliance "Time For My Choice" released an interim election monitoring report on July 3. They documented a broad range of election code violations, particularly regarding the formation of district and precinct level election commissions. The election code requires these commissions, responsible for counting and compiling votes, to have representatives from opposition parties. The report says that in some cases, election commissions simply ignored that requirement, or denied nominations on "frivolous" pretexts. At the precinct level, the report cites a number of cases in which opposition party members were appointed to election commissions, but then came under pressure to resign voluntarily. The report says that opposition party members were threatened with State Security Committee investigations, the loss of state jobs, and the loss of pensions, among other inducements.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The report also details widespread use of administrative resources to aid the campaign of President Bakiyev. It claims that nationwide, school teachers were

ordered to collect signatures to support Bakiyev's candidacy, and that since the campaign opened, government officials at all levels have been actively campaigning for Bakiyev.

Bakiyev Spending Most, Getting Best Coverage

¶4. (SBU) As reported in the Kyrgyz-language newspaper Achyk Sayasat, a local NGO analyzed television and radio coverage of the election, and found that over one week, Bakiyev received 97 percent of the election-related broadcast time from the state-run National Television and Radio Company (KTR), and 94 percent from Channel 5 television. Those numbers cannot be independently verified, but they are consistent with the impression received from a sampling of broadcasts.

¶5. (SBU) On June 29, for example, KTR had four stories about President Bakiyev performing his official duties, then video about Bakiyev's campaign, a report on the other five candidates without video, a video report on candidate Nurlan Motuyev criticizing another candidate's refusal to debate him (ref A), and a story on the Atambayev campaign's alleged violation of CEC rules. On June 30, KTR had two reports with video on Bakiyev's campaign activities, one report with video on Temir Sariyev, a report without video on the other candidates, a report saying that over half of the respondents to a survey plan to vote for Bakiyev, and then several reports on President Bakiyev carrying out his official duties.

¶6. (SBU) In addition to the favorable coverage, presumably free, the CEC released data showing that Bakiyev has outspent his five opponents by almost a factor of three, spending 14.7 million som (\$342,000) in comparison to Atambayev's 4.5

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million som (\$105,000), and the rest of the field's combined 1.1 million som (\$26,000). Bakiyev still has over 20 million som (\$465,000) remaining in his campaign fund, while Atambayev has only 13,000 som (\$300) remaining, and the rest of the field has less than 100,000 som (\$2,300) combined.

¶7. (SBU) Bakiyev's financial advantage is consistent with what the Embassy has observed of campaign advertising. Bakiyev billboards are prominent on every main thoroughfare in Bishkek, and according to photos from an internet blog, almost monopolize the highways in Chui Oblast outside Bishkek. In comparison, the Embassy has observed a small number of Nazaraliyev billboards, and one Sariyev billboard. Over the 4th of July weekend, the Embassy finally observed the first advertising from the Atambayev campaign -- small posters stuck to telephone poles.

NGOs Raise Election Issues with MVD

¶8. (SBU) At an otherwise uneventful NGO roundtable on Kyrgyzstan's right to freedom of assembly, the organizers introduced a colonel from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) as a surprise guest. The colonel opened by disavowing all political intrigue, and casting the MVD's mission as straightforward enforcement of the law. He said that he looked forward to hearing about campaign problems, and several participants, most apparently members of election-focused NGOs, took him up on the offer. The colonel responded more or less substantively to each. One participant raised the arrests of activists wearing Atambayev shirts at a Bakiyev event in Talas (ref B). The colonel replied that the Presidential Security Service had ordered the arrests for security reasons, because the activists were blocking the President's exit route. (Note: The activists were released without charges after a few hours.)

¶9. (SBU) Another participant raised an incident in Issyk-Kul Oblast in which local police threatened UPM organizers, and then searched their homes. The colonel agreed that it sounded like a violation of the law, and said

the MVD would investigate. In additional cases involving the police shutting down opposition gatherings for spurious reasons, the colonel did not make any commitments, but encouraged the speakers to make formal complaints with the MVD.

Comment

¶10. (C) If the colonel's presence at the meeting marks a change from mild repression to ingenuous engagement for the Bakiyev Administration's NGO strategy, it looks like a smart move. While a few of the participants expressed skepticism about government intentions, more were nodding in agreement as the colonel spoke about the importance of fairly enforcing election laws.

¶11. (C) With a significant disadvantage in licit funds, a far greater disadvantage in media coverage and administrative resources, and, most importantly, very few people who will count votes in their favor, there is little chance that even the serious oppositionists -- Atambayev and Sariyev -- have any real shot at winning. Nevertheless, by running they enhance their name recognition, and position themselves for possible appointment to a Government position by Bakiyev or for a seat in parliament. In fact, rumors abound that Sariyev may be the next Prime Minister and that early parliamentary elections are in the offing. Post will continue to monitor the campaign for developments.

LITZENBERGER